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DE LA GARZA PROPOSAL TO EXPAND POLLUTION-CONTROL EFFORTS ALONG BORDER APPROVED BY SENATE

For immediate release, Thursday, February 3, 1994

WASHINGTON -- A proposal by Rep. Kika de la Garza, D-Texas, to expand the authority of the International Boundary and Water Commission (IBWC) so it can negotiate agreements with Mexico to fight pollution problems along the entire U.S.-Mexico border was included in a Senate bill approved Wednesday. This proposal amends the current legislative authority that the IBWC has beyond the Rio Grande to all of our border U.S.-Mexico border. The original legislation was also sponsored by Rep. de la Garza.

Last August, Rep. de la Garza introduced legislation to expand the IBWC authority to negotiate cooperative projects by the U.S. and Mexican governments to fund, construct and operate sewage treatment and other pollution controls facilities to include the entire U.S.-Mexico border. His proposal was added to the Senate version of the State Department authorization bill by Arizona Senator Dennis Deconcini and approved by voice vote. The bill passed the Senate 92-8.

"It's time Congress give the IBWC the authority it needs to help both countries work cooperatively to fight pollution problems along all of the border. The Senate action now moves us one step closer to this goal. "This legislative authority will complement the environmental efforts included in the NAFTA supplemental environmental agreement between the U.S. and Mexico. I'm going to urge my colleagues on the House Foreign Affairs Committee to include this provision in the final conference agreement. It's my hope Congress will give the IBWC this expanded authority this year," said Rep. de la Garza.

Under its current authority, the IBWC is limited to negotiating pollution-control agreements for the Rio Grande portion of the U.S.-Mexico border. The IBWC's first jointly-funded and operated sewage treatment project is now under construction to serve Nuevo Laredo, Mexico.